MARVEL COMICS

THE EVERYMAN AVENGER

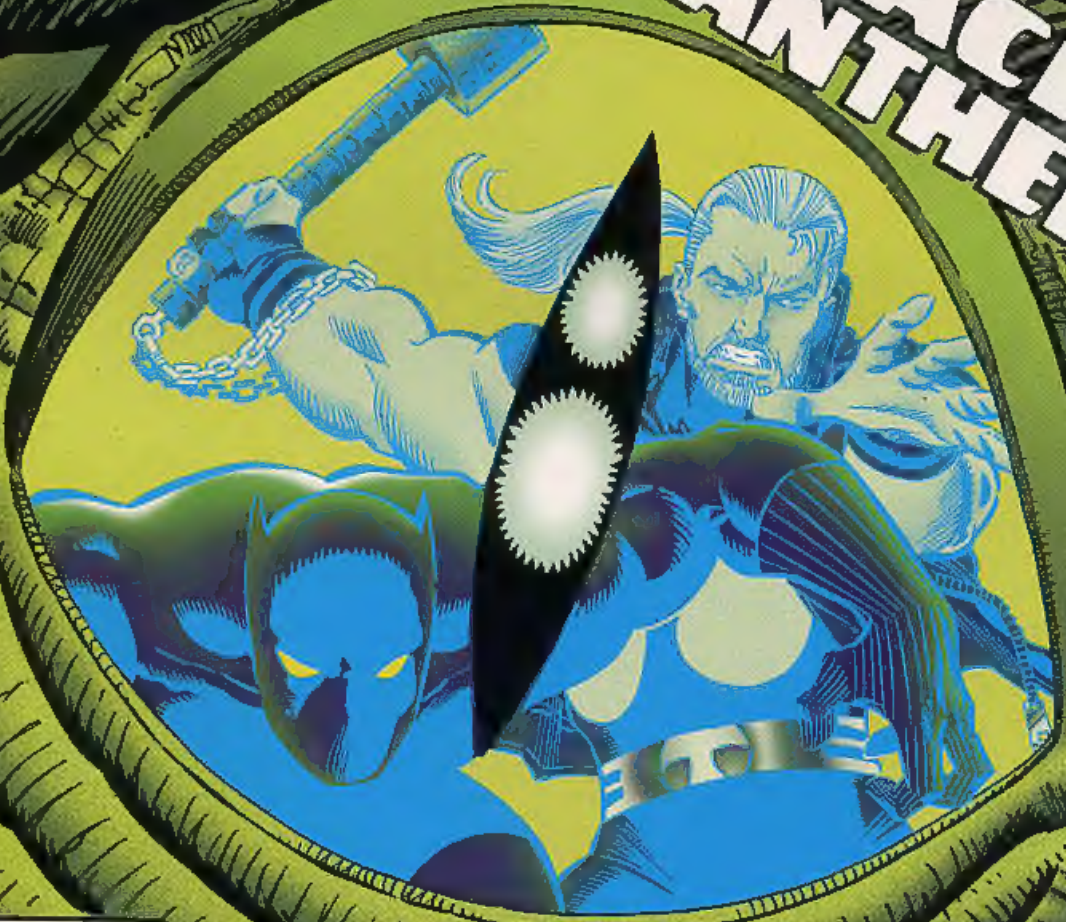
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

20
MAY '95

THUNDER STRIKE™

FEATURING THE JUNGLE BORN

BLACK PANTHER



DIRECT EDITION

$1.50 US $2.05 CAN

THE THING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD!

WHEN ARCHITECT ERIC MASTERSON STAMPS HIS WOODEN WALKING STICK UPON THE GROUND, IT IS TRANSFORMED INTO A MYSTICAL WEAPON CALLED THUNDERSTRIKE! ARMED WITH INCREDIBLE POWERS, MASTERSON WORKS TO PROVE THAT ONE MAN MUST MAKE A DIFFERENCE, BECAUSE THIS WORLD STILL NEEDS HEROES! STAN LEE PRESENTS ...

THUNDERSTRIKE!

RON FRENZ & TOM DeFALCO PENCILS, PLOT & SCRIPT • AL MILGROM FINISHED ART • JANICE CHIANG LETTERS • CHRIS D'ELIPPO COLORS • RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR • MARK GRUENWALD EDITOR IN CHIEF

THUNDERSTRIKE® Vol. 1, No. 20, May, 1995. (ISSN #1073-8789) Published by MARVEL COMICS, Terry Stewart, President. Stan Lee, Publisher. Michael Hobson, Group Vice President, Publishing. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published monthly. Copyright © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved. Price $1.50 per copy in the U.S. and $2.05 in Canada. Subscription rate for 12 issues: $18.00 U.S.; $30.00 foreign; and Canadian subscribers must add $10.00 for postage and GST. GST #R127032852. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. THUNDERSTRIKE (including all prominent characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof) is a trademark of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THUNDERSTRIKE, c/o MARVEL DIRECT MARKETING INC./SUBSCRIPTION DEPT. P.O. BOX 1979 DANBURY, CT. 06813-1979. TELEPHONE # (203) 743-5331. Printed in the U.S.A.

VERY FUNNY, 'STRIKE!
A JERRY SEINFELD YOU'RE NOT!
NOW, STAND ASIDE--! IT'S COLD OUT THERE!
T'CHALLA! I KNOW YOUR COSTUME IS INSULATED, BUT THE TEMPERATURE IS RAPIDLY DROPPING--!
BE AT EASE, MADAM WIDOW! THE BLACK PANTHER IS NOT EASILY GOVERNED BY MERE CLIMATIC WHIMS!

UH, GUYS, IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN, I'M A LAST MINUTE DRAFTEE... AND NEVER GOT A FULL BRIEFING ON THIS MISSION!
I TRUST YOU'VE HEARD OF THE SAVAGE LAND?
YEAH, SURE! IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A PREHISTORIC JUNGLE LOCATED SOMEWHERE NEAR THE SOUTH POLE-- BUT I NEVER THOUGHT IT WAS REAL!
IT EXISTS... AND IS QUITE NEAR... HIDDEN BENEATH A LAYER OF DENSE CLOUDS!
A TROPICAL PARADISE WHICH HAS BEEN NESTLED WITHIN A RING OF VOLCANIC MOUNTAINS FOR UNTOLD CENTURIES!

SHIELD ESTABLISHED THIS OBSERVATION POST MANY YEARS PAST.
ALL CONTACT WAS LOST A LITTLE OVER A WEEK AGO, BUT SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS PREVENTED ANY ATTEMPTS TO RESCUE THE SURVIVING PERSONNEL UNTIL NOW!
CAREFUL, T'CHALLA! YOU'RE NOT WEARING A HEADLAMP!
THE EYES OF A CAT ARE NOT SIGHTLESS IN THE DARK--

--NOR ARE MY REMAINING SENSES WITHOUT SIMILAR ADVANTAGE!
I HAVE FOUND OUR QUARRY!
THUNDERSTRIKE! THE SCIENTISTS WE SEEK ARE LOCKED WITHIN THAT DISTANT STORAGE LOCKER!

SHRAAKT!
I DON'T GET IT! THIS DOOR SEEMS TO BE BOLTED FROM THE INSIDE!
WHOEVER'S LOCKED IN HERE... DID IT DELIBERATELY!
I SUSPECT THE ANSWER TO YOUR UNSPOKEN QUESTION WILL SOON BE REVEALED!

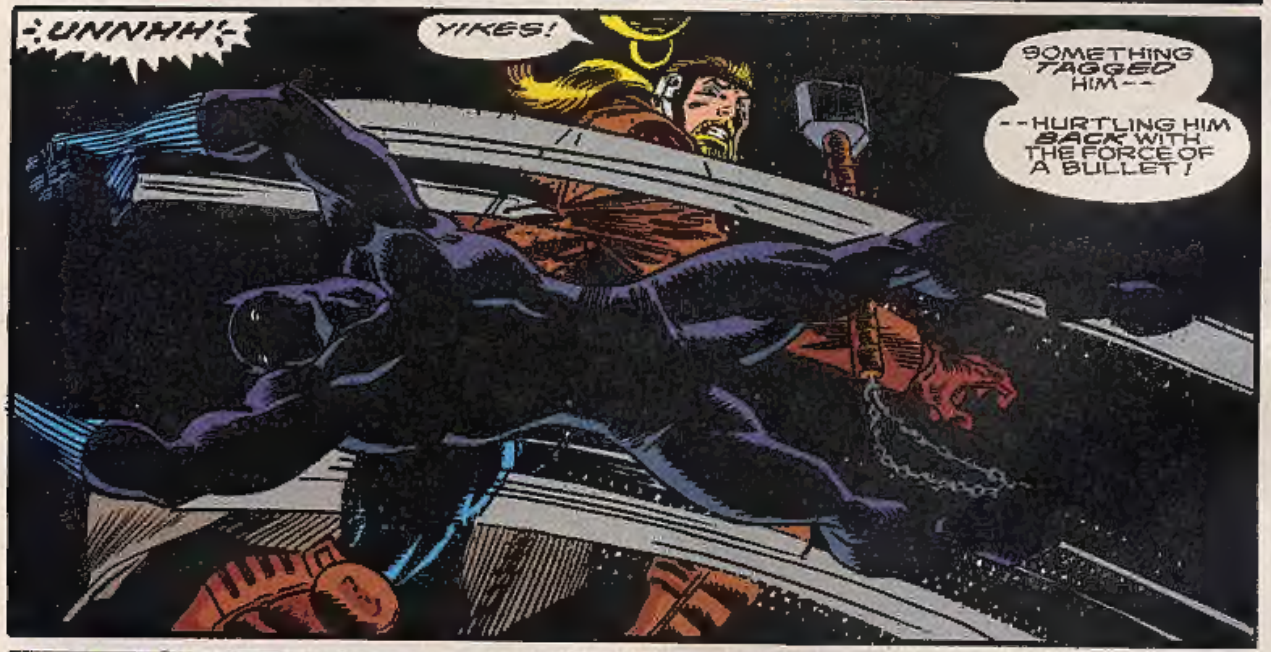
T-THE THING-- IT'S FINALLY FOUND US!
N-NO! T-THEY'RE HUMAN!
N-HELP HAS FINALLY ARRIVED!
WHAT HAPPENED HERE? THEY LOOK TERRIFIED, ON THE VERGE OF STARVATION.
IT'S LIKE THEY'VE BEEN THROUGH A WAR!
DON'T JUST STAND THERE, STRIKE! THESE PEOPLE NEED IMMEDIATE ATTENTION!

SOMETHING PROWLS THE DEEP AND DISTANT SHADOWS!
BUT I MUST REMAIN HERE TO GUARD THESE SCIENTISTS!
W-WE NEVER HAD A CHANCE!
I-IT MUST HAVE COME OFF THE LAST SUPPLY SHIP!
WHERE IS THE REST OF YOUR CREW?

W-WE CAN'T STAY HERE! T-THE THING WILL BE BACK!
I-IT WON'T STOP UNTIL WE'RE ALL DEAD!
THUNDERSTRIKE! PANTHER! I'LL GET THESE PEOPLE TO THE QUINJET!
YOU CHECK THE UNDERGROUND LEVELS FOR MORE SURVIVORS!
YOU GOT IT, BOSS LADY!
ASHFORD! CORBO! TUCKY! NEWELL! T-THE MONSTER GOT THEM ALL!

WITH ALL THIS TALK OF MONSTERS, IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS WHY SHIELD CALLED IN THE AVENGERS.
SLOW DOWN, PANTHER! I DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU!
WE'VE BOTH SEEN ENOUGH OLD MOVIES TO GUESS THE NEXT TWO VICTIMS ON THE CREATURE'S HIT PARADE!
MOVIES? MY ROYAL DUTIES AS THE KING OF WAKANDA PERMIT LITTLE TIME FOR SUCH FRIVOLOUS PURSUITS!

I GUESS THAT EXPLAINS WHY YOU'RE SUCH A BUNDLE OF YUKS!
OH, WELL...AT LEAST IT'S WARMER DOWN HERE, AND--AW, NO! HE SLIPPED AWAY WHILE I WAS BLATHERING!
T'CHALLA?!
PANTHER?
YOUR HIGHNESS?


:UNNHH!:
YIKES!
SOMETHING TAGGED HIM--
--HURTLING HIM BACK WITH THE FORCE OF A BULLET!

YOU OKAY, MISTER?
I...AM UNINJURED!
Y'SEE? THERE'S A LOT TO BE LEARNED IN THEM OLD FILMS!

I ASSUME YOU FOUND IT--
--WHATEVER IT IS!
MORE TO THE POINT, MY MIGHTY MUSCLED COMPANION...

IT HAS FOUND US!
HHHSSSSSSSSS
GOOD LORD! WHA-WHAT IS IT?!
HE IS STEGRON, THE DINOSAUR MAN!
I THOUGHT HIS SCENT WAS FAMILIAR, BUT HE SEEMS MORE SAVAGE, MORE MONSTROUS THAN OUR LAST ENCOUNTER!
BEWARE HIS DEADLY TAIL, MY FRIEND!
DR. VINCENT STEGRON WAS ONCE A BRILLIANT SCIENTIST--
--BUT HE CHOSE TO SACRIFICE HIS MIND ALONG WITH HIS HUMANITY!
THWOK!
YOU MUSSST NOT SSSTOP STEGRON!
WHAT IS IT THAT YOU SEEK, CREATURE?
WHY HAVE YOU COME TO THIS DESOLATE PLACE?
WHY ATTACK THESE HELPLESS SCIENTISTS?
WHY?!

SSSTEGRON MUSSST BE HOME!

;uggnh;

BTHOOM!

WE'LL BE GLAD TO PACK YOU UP AND SEND YOU THERE...

I'M SURE THERE'S A FEDERAL EXPRESS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD!

NO OFFENSE, MY FELINE FRIEND... BUT YOU'RE A LITTLE SLOW WHEN IT COMES TO SPITTING OUT A WARNING.

FORGIVE ME, AVENGER! I MISTAKENLY ASSUMED YOU POSSESSED FASTER REFLEXES!

NAH! NOT EVERYONE'S AS QUICK AS A CAT--OR UH-OH! I JUST GOT A WARNING BEEP! THE WIDOW'S COMING ONLINE!

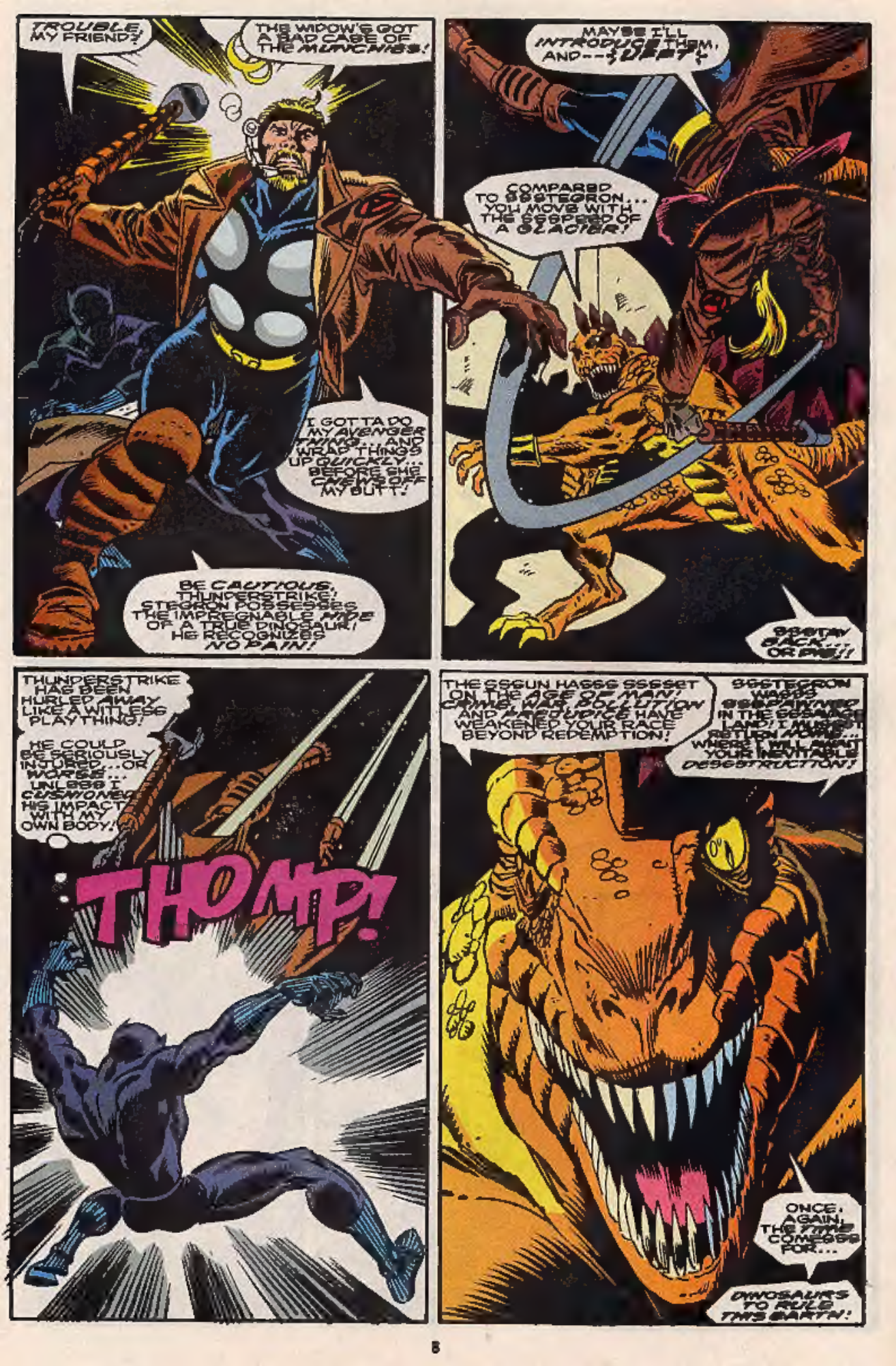
WHERE ARE YOU, THUNDERSTRIKE? WHY THE DELAY? WHAT'S KEEPING YOU?

I JUST RECEIVED A REPORT FROM THE NEAREST MILITARY BASE!

A MAJOR STORM FRONT IS MOVING IN!

YOU MUST RETURN TO THE QUINJET AT ONCE!

WONDERFUL!


TROUBLE, MY FRIEND?
THE WIDOW'S GOT A BAD CASE OF THE MUNCHIES!
I GOTTA DO MY AVENGER THING... AND WRAP THINGS UP QUICKLY... BEFORE SHE CHEWS OFF MY BUTT!
BE CAUTIOUS, THUNDERSTRIKE! STEGRON POSSESSES THE IMPREGNABLE HIDE OF A TRUE DINOSAUR! HE RECOGNIZES NO PAIN!
MAYBE I'LL INTRODUCE THEM, AND--; DEFT;
COMPARED TO SSSTEGRON... YOU MOVE WITH THE SSSPEED OF A GLACIER!
SSSTAY BACK... OR DIE!!
THUNDERSTRIKE HAS BEEN HURLED AWAY LIKE A WITLESS PLAYTHING!
HE COULD BE SERIOUSLY INJURED...OR WORSE... UNLESS I CUSHIONED HIS IMPACT WITH MY OWN BODY!
THOMP!
THE SSSUN HASSS SSSET ON THE AGE OF MAN! CRIME, WAR, POLLUTION AND PREJUDICE HAVE WEAKENED YOUR RACE BEYOND REDEMPTION!
SSSTEGRON WASSS SSSPAWNED IN THE SSSAVAGE LAND! I MUSSST RETURN AGAIN... WHERE I WILL AWAIT YOUR INEVITABLE DESSSTRUCTION!
ONCE, AGAIN, THE TIME COMESSS FOR...
DINOSAURS TO RULE THIS EARTH!

AT THAT VERY INSTANT, A MOST ALIEN VESSEL GLIDES AMONG THE MURKY CURRENTS OF NEW YORK HARBOR...
ALAS, THE GENTLE BOON I SO FREELY OFFER OTHERS--
--IS FOREVER DENIED ME!
SETH THE SERPENT-GOD OF DEATH CANNOT DIE!
THUS, I HAVE OFTEN BEEN COMPELLED TO RECREATE MYSELF, EMPLOYING THE SCIENTIFIC ADVANCES OF MY LOYAL GENETI-TROOPS!
'TIS THEIR VERY SKILL WHICH LEADS ME HERE--
THE DISEMBODIED LOKI CURRENTLY HAS NEED OF A PHYSICAL FORM!
PERHAPS, I CAN AID YOU, MY MOST VALUED FRIEND...
AS I CAN LIKEWISE BE OF SERVICE TO THEE...
BY CONQUERING THE MEDDLESOME FOOL WHO RECENTLY CAUSED THE RUINATION AND DOWNFALL OF THY ARMAGEDDON COMPLEX!
THE MORTAL WHO IS CURRENTLY CALLED THUNDERSTRIKE!
LET THE BARGAIN BE STRUCK--
--AND THE PACT BE SEALED!

MEANWHILE, BACK ON THE EDGE OF THE SAVAGE LAND...
CHALK IT OFF TO PURE ATTITUDE--
--AND A GREAT SENSE OF STYLE!
HUMANKIND ISSS FRAIL! WEAK! I AM SSSURPRISED YOU HAVE SSSURVIVED SSSO LONG!
GOT TO FIND A WAY TO PUT THIS SNAKE ON ICE!

UNNNH!--IT'S NO USE! HE'S TOO FREAKIN' FAST!
SK-WAK!
EVERY TIME I MOVE IN ON HIM... HIS TAIL BATTERS ME BACK!

RECKLESS OAF! YOU WILL NOW PAY FOR YOUR FOOLHARDY ATTACK!
I...UH... HOPE YOU TAKE VISA!
HOO-BOY!

THUNDERSTRIKE IS IN DESPERATE NEED OF A TIMELY RESPITE!
NEITHER HIS GREAT STRENGTH... NOR MY CAT-LIKE SPEED... HAS PROVEN SUFFICIENT TO DEFEAT THE DINOSAUR MAN!
THUS, I MUST COMPENSATE--

--BY EMPLOYING SIMPLE LEVERAGE TO THIS MASSIVE SCIENTIFIC APPARATUS!

KWHOMP!
NICE SHOT, CAT GUY!
WITH CLUTCH HITTING LIKE THAT, YOU'D HAVE A REAL SHOT AT MAKING A MAJOR LEAGUE BALL TEAM!

I SHALL KEEP YOUR SUGGESTION IN MIND

IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT I *RENOUNCE* MY THRONE!

POWAW!

COME MY FELLOW AVENGER! WE MUST *PRESS* OUR ATTACK!

WE DARE NOT ALLOW OUR REPTILIAN RIVAL TO RECOVER!

I HEAR YOU, PANTHER OL' PAL! BUT I'VE SUDDENLY GOT A NEW *TAKE* ON THIS SITUATION --!

I DON'T KNOW THE CURRENT THINKING ON THE SUBJECT, BUT WHEN I WAS A BOY... SCIENTISTS BELIEVED THAT A GLOBAL DROP IN TEMPERATURE IS WHAT *WIPED OUT* THE DINOSAURS!

MAYBE WE CAN SAP LIZARD BREATH'S STRENGTH AND SLOW HIM DOWN

--BY EXPOSING HIM TO THE *GREAT OUTDOORS!*

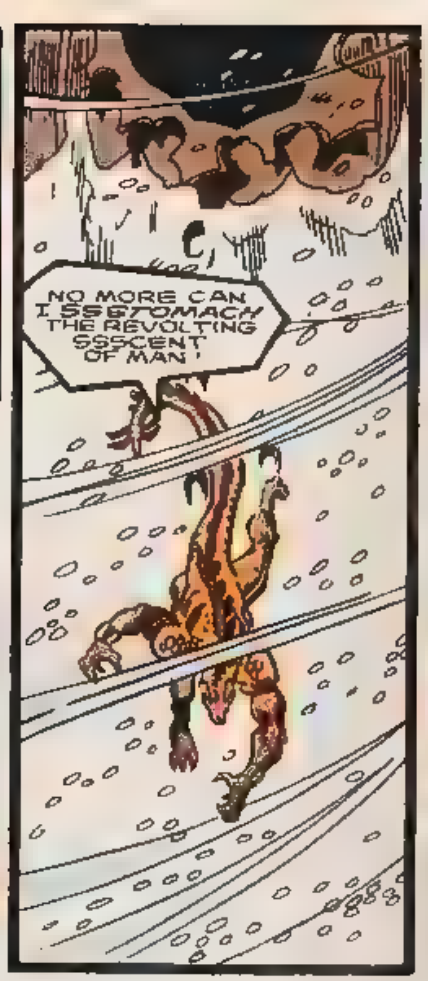
KWA-PWOOM!

WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE* HUMAN?

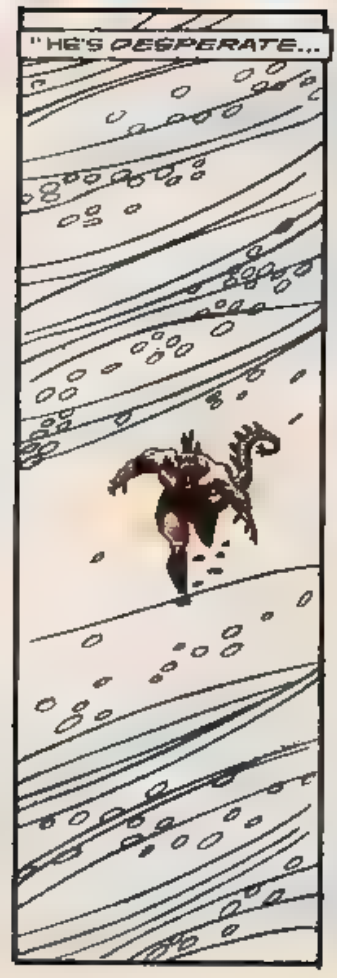
SSSTEGRON HATES THE *COLD!*

AND YET...

THISSS MAY BE THE OPPORTUNITY I HAVE LONG SSSOUGHT!
NO LONGER CAN I BEAR BEING TRAPPED WITHIN THISSS SSSTIFLING 'NSSSTALLATION'


NO MORE CAN I SSSTOMACH THE REVOLTING SSSCENT OF MAN!

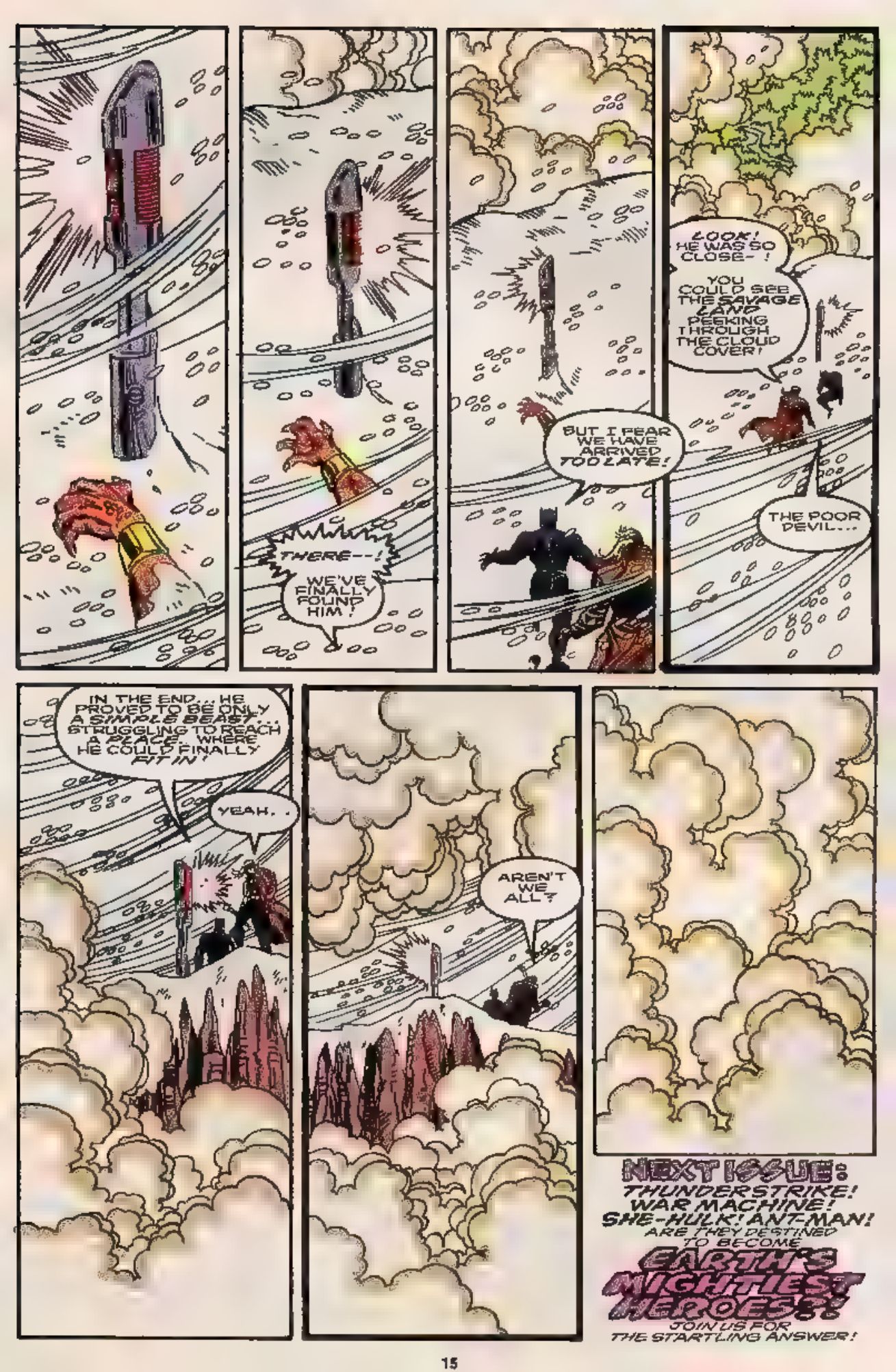
THUNDERSTRIKE! THE WEATHER'S TURNING SAVAGE! WE MUST LIFT OFF IMMEDIATELY!
SORRY, WIDOW! WE'RE NOT FINISHED HERE! WE NEED MORE TIME!
THERE ISN'T ANY!
STEGRON WILL NEVER SURVIVE THE COLD!
THEN... WHY DID HE RACE INTO IT?


"HE'S DESPERATE...

"AS HE TOLD US EARLIER...

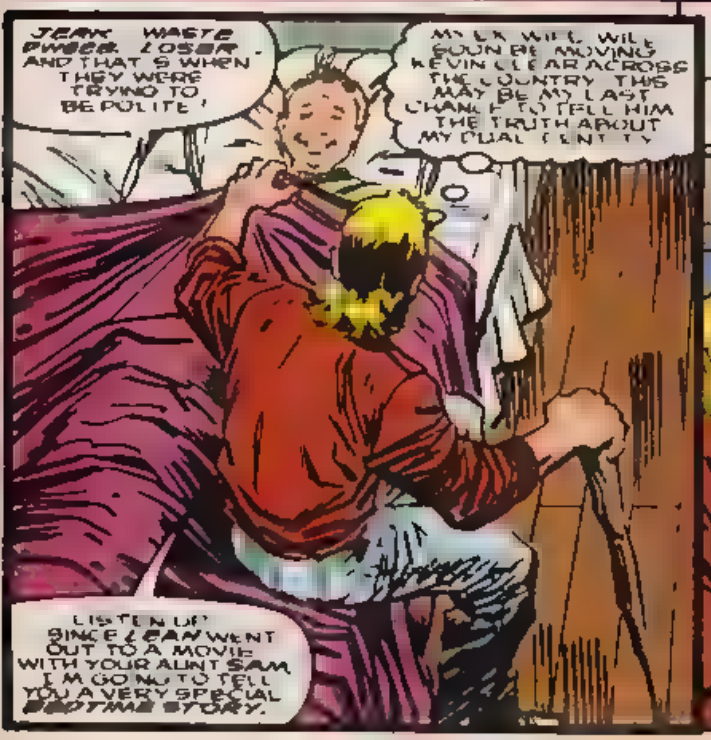
"HE YEARNS TO RETURN TO THE SAVAGE LAND.

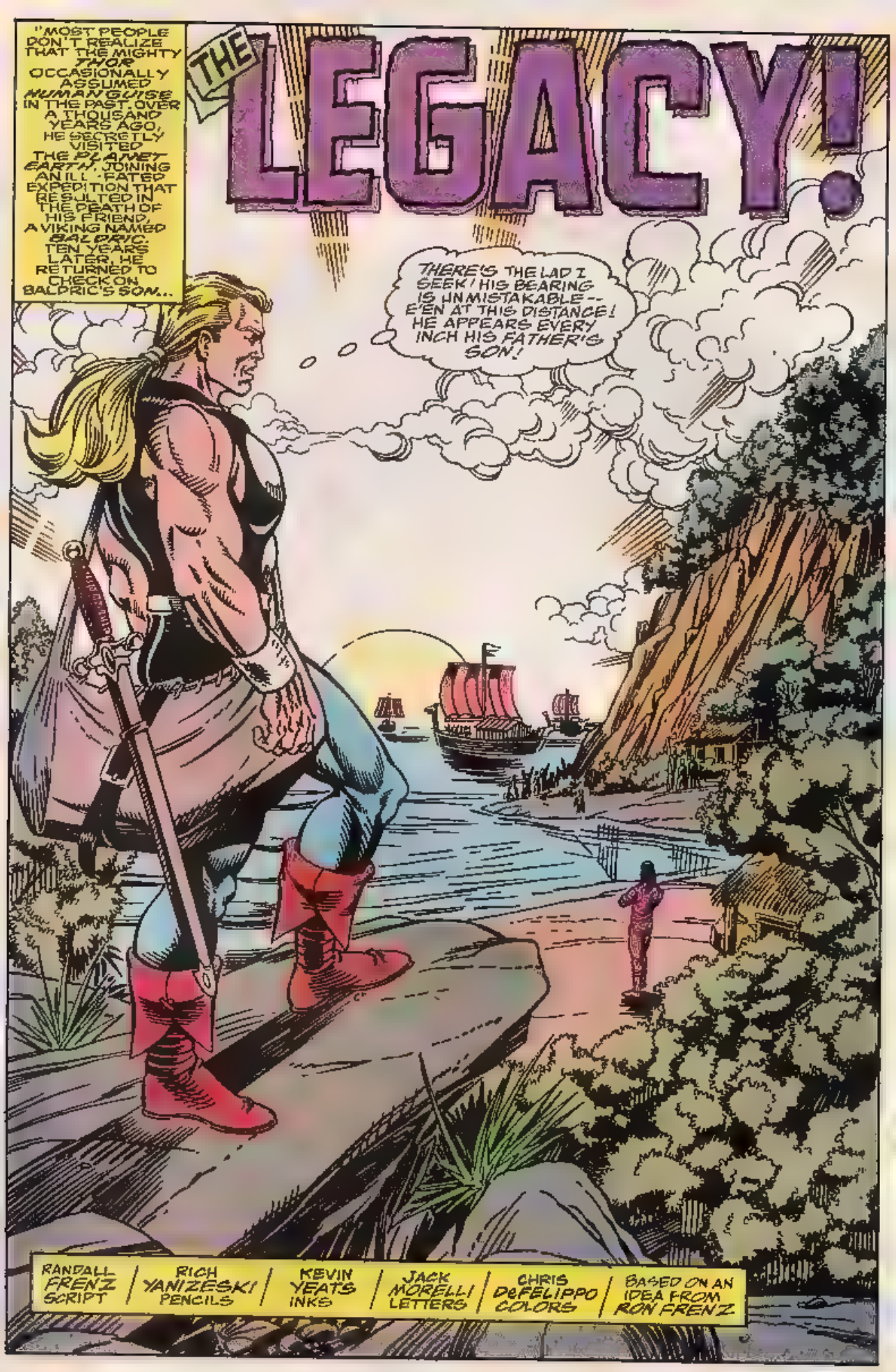
"HE WANTS TO BE REUNITED WITH THE ONLY SPOT ON THIS EARTH...
"A DINOSAUR MAN CAN CALL HOME!"


THERE--!
WE'VE FINALLY FOUND HIM!
BUT I FEAR WE HAVE ARRIVED TOO LATE!
LOOK! HE WAS SO CLOSE-!
YOU COULD SEE THE SAVAGE LAND PEEKING THROUGH THE CLOUD COVER!
THE POOR DEVIL...
IN THE END... HE PROVED TO BE ONLY A SIMPLE BEAST... STRUGGLING TO REACH A PLACE... WHERE HE COULD FINALLY FIT IN!
YEAH...
AREN'T WE ALL?
NEXT ISSUE:
THUNDERSTRIKE! WAR MACHINE! SHE-HULK! ANT-MAN!
ARE THEY DESTINED TO BECOME
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES?!
JOIN US FOR THE STARTLING ANSWER!

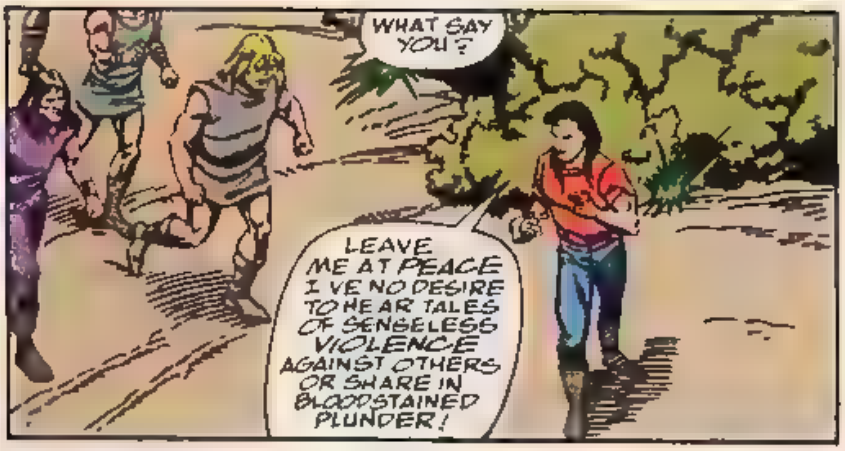
STAN LEE · Tales of MIDGARD PRESENTS

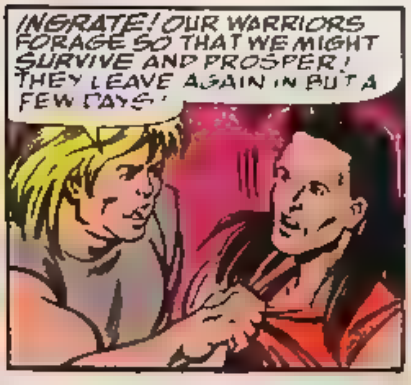
HOME OF THE AMAZING HUMAN RACE!

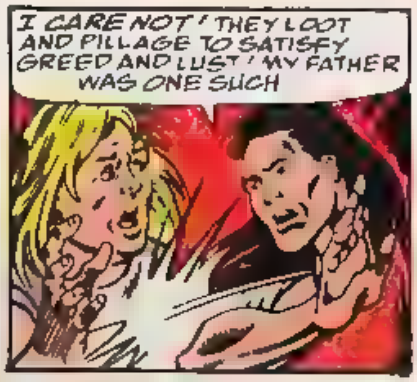


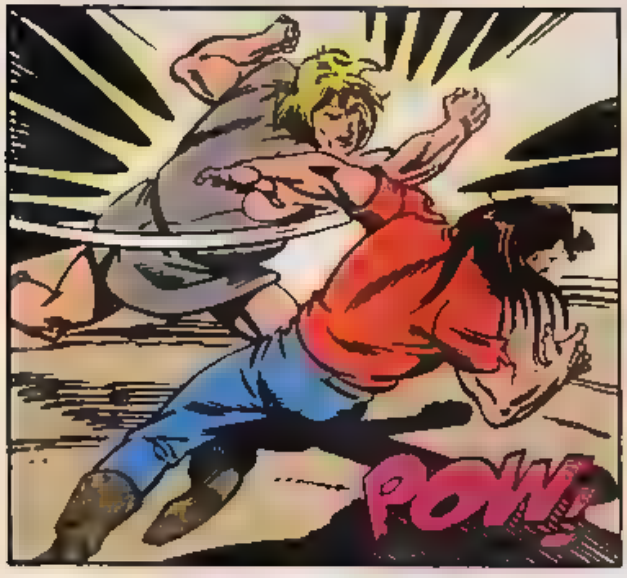

THE LEGACY!
"MOST PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE THAT THE MIGHTY THOR OCCASIONALLY ASSUMED HUMAN GUISE IN THE PAST. OVER A THOUSAND YEARS AGO, HE SECRETLY VISITED THE PLANET EARTH, JOINING AN ILL-FATED EXPEDITION THAT RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF HIS FRIEND, A VIKING NAMED BALDRIC. TEN YEARS LATER, HE RETURNED TO CHECK ON BALDRIC'S SON...
THERE'S THE LAD I SEEK! HIS BEARING IS UNMISTAKABLE -- E'EN AT THIS DISTANCE! HE APPEARS EVERY INCH HIS FATHER'S SON!
RANDALL FRENZ SCRIPT
RICH YANIZESKI PENCILS
KEVIN YEATS INKS
JACK MORELLI LETTERS
CHRIS DeFELIPPO COLORS
BASED ON AN IDEA FROM RON FRENZ

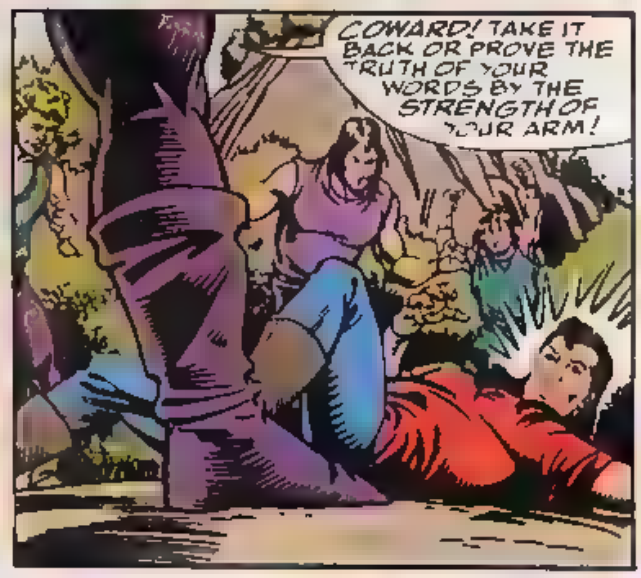
A LONE FIGURE WATCHED FROM A DISTANCE AS SEVERAL SHIPS MADE LANDFALL...
CEDARIC ~! WHY DO YOU STAND THUS ALONE & DO YOU NOT WISH TO GREET OUR RETURNING WARRIORS AND LISTEN AS THEY RECOUNT THEIR EXPLOITS!?


WHAT SAY YOU?
LEAVE ME AT PEACE I VE NO DESIRE TO HEAR TALES OF SENSELESS VIOLENCE AGAINST OTHERS OR SHARE IN BLOODSTAINED PLUNDER!

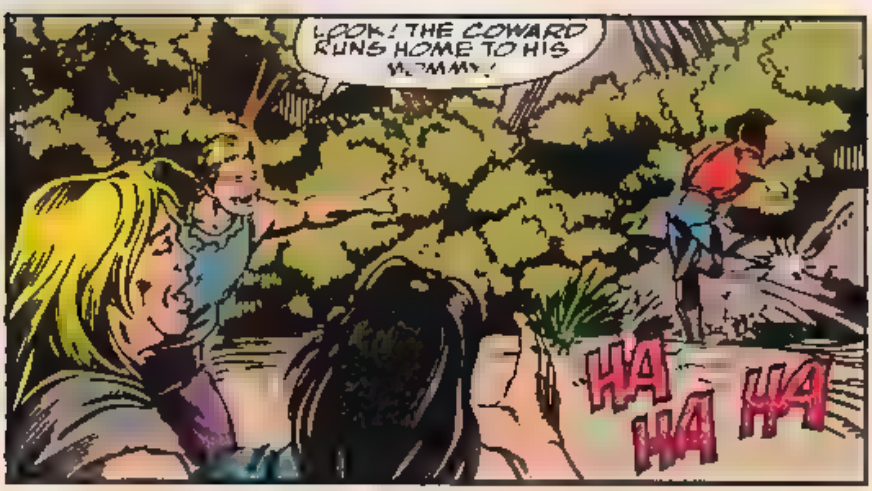

INGRATE! OUR WARRIORS FORAGE SO THAT WE MIGHT SURVIVE AND PROSPER! THEY LEAVE AGAIN IN BUT A FEW DAYS!


I CARE NOT! THEY LOOT AND PILLAGE TO SATISFY GREED AND LUST! MY FATHER WAS ONE SUCH


POW!


COWARD! TAKE IT BACK OR PROVE THE TRUTH OF YOUR WORDS BY THE STRENGTH OF YOUR ARM!

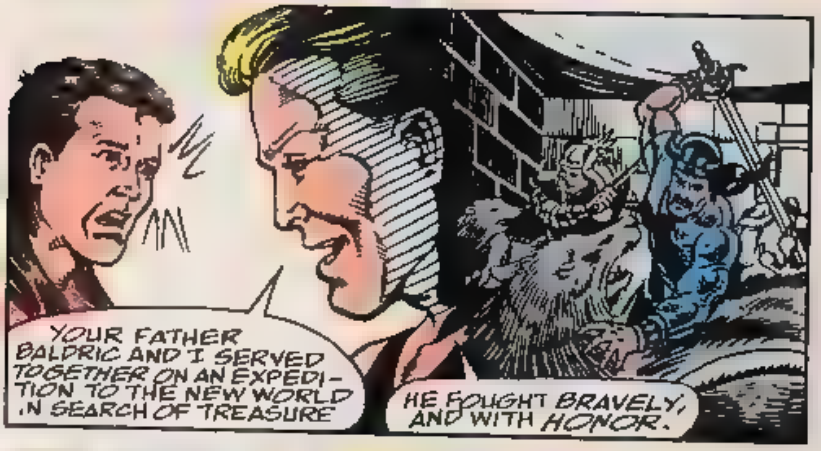
NAY! I'LL NOT BE REDUCED TO THE LIKES OF YOU!


LOOK! THE COWARD RUNS HOME TO HIS MOMMY!
HA HA HA

"SIGURD" FOLLOWED CEDARIC INTO THE VILLAGE...
CEDARIC! WAIT! I MUST SPEAK WITH YOU!

THE ANGRY TEEN TRIED TO IGNORE THE DISGUISED THUNDER GOD.
SON! WAIT!
TO NO AVAIL!

I KNEW YOUR FATHER! I WAS WITH HIM WHEN HE DIED!
HEAR ME OUT!
WHA...? SPEAK THEN, STRANGER.


YOUR FATHER BALDRIC AND I SERVED TOGETHER ON AN EXPEDITION TO THE NEW WORLD IN SEARCH OF TREASURE
HE FOUGHT BRAVELY, AND WITH HONOR.

HE SELFLESSLY RISKED HIS LIFE FOR OTHERS! YOUR FATHER DESERVES YOUR LOVE AND RESPECT!

I WILL NOT RESPECT A MAN WHOSE GREED LEFT HIS WIFE A PENNILESS WIDOW AND HIS SON AN ORPHAN!

IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, SIGURD OBSERVED YOUNG CEDARIC TO BE A MAN OF COMPASSION...

LEARNING..

-AND SKILL..
BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, OF PRINCIPLE.

DAYS BECAME WEEKS AS "SIGURD" SOJOURNED AMONG BALDRIC'S PEOPLE! THEN ONE DAY A MESSENGER ARRIVED FROM A VILLAGE SEVERAL WEEKS DISTANT

BY THE GODS, I'M TIRED. I'VE RIDDEN FOR DAYS WITHOUT STOPPING, AND I ONLY PRAY I'M IN TIME!

TO ARMS! TO ARMS! VANDALS COME TO PLUNDER YOUR VILLAGE AND DISGRACE YOUR WOMEN! THE VANDAL CHIEFTAIN DARES THE WARRIOR BALDRIC TO STOP HIM!

SAY MORE FRIEND HOW FAR OFF ARE THEY?

STILL SEVERAL WEEKS DISTANT! RUMOR TELLS OF A FIRE-BREATHING DRAGON THAT LAYS WASTE TO VILLAGES... BUT LUMBERS SLOWLY!

WHAT ARE WE TO DO? OUR WARRIORS ARE ON AN EXPEDITION! WE ARE ALL BUT DEFENSELESS!

THERE ARE UNTRIED YOUNG WARRIORS AMONG YOU, PERHAPS...?

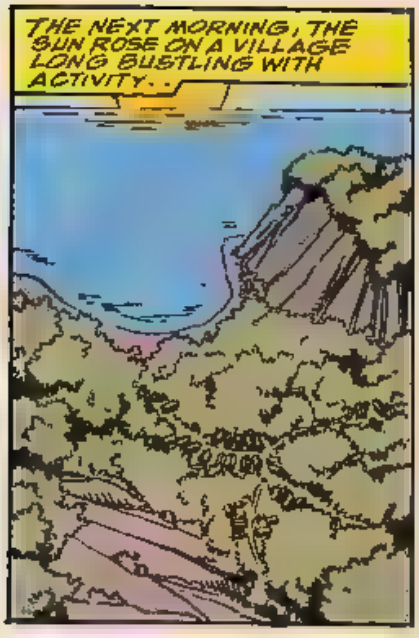
BY THOR'S HAMMER-- THAT'S IT! WE CAN TRAIN THE YOUNG-STERS TO FIGHT! WITH OUR EXPERIENCE AND THEIR STRENGTH WE CAN DO IT!

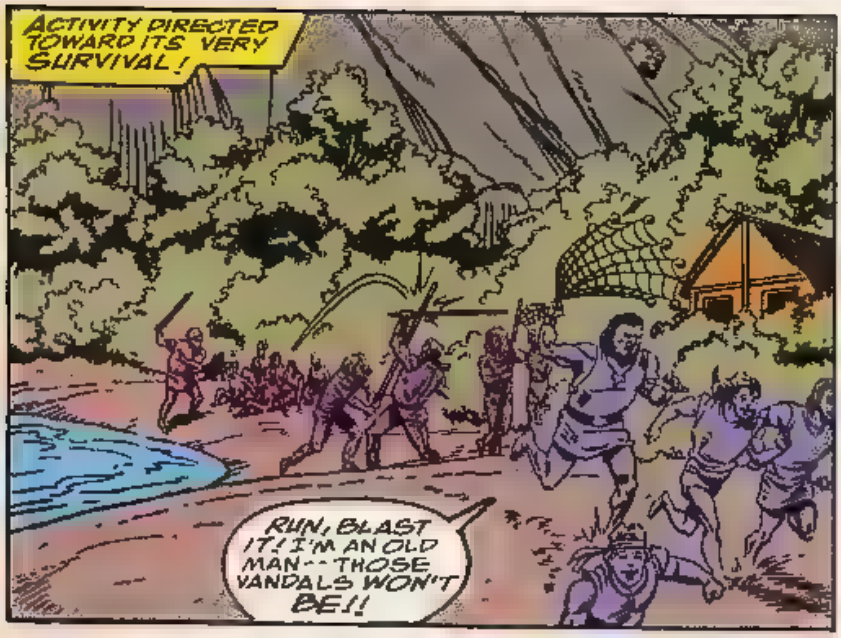
AYE AND SIGURD OFFERS HIS SERVICES AS WELL! WHAT SAY YOU, LADS?

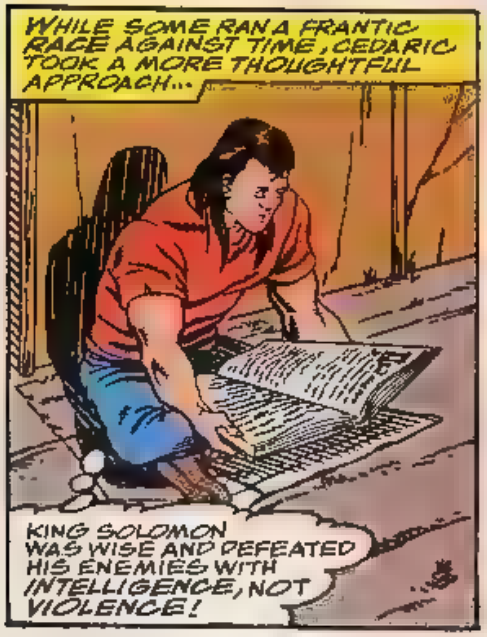
COUNT ME IN! WE'LL SHOW THOSE PLUNDERERS!

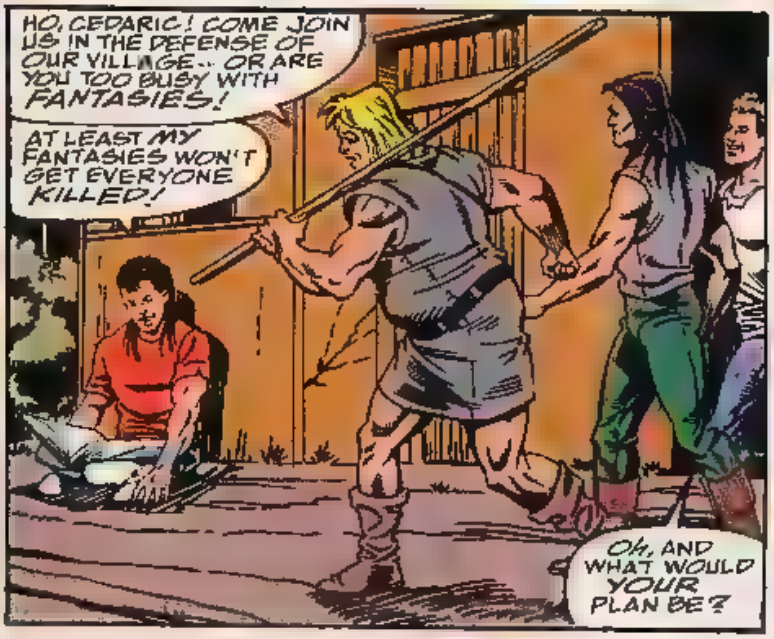
AYE! BRING THEM ON!

GOOD LADS! TOGETHER, WE'LL SHOW THEM THE STUFF OF WHICH TRUE WARRIORS ARE MADE!


THE NEXT MORNING, THE SUN ROSE ON A VILLAGE LONG BUSTLING WITH ACTIVITY...


ACTIVITY DIRECTED TOWARD ITS VERY SURVIVAL!
RUN, BLAST IT! I'M AN OLD MAN -- THOSE VANDALS WON'T BE!!

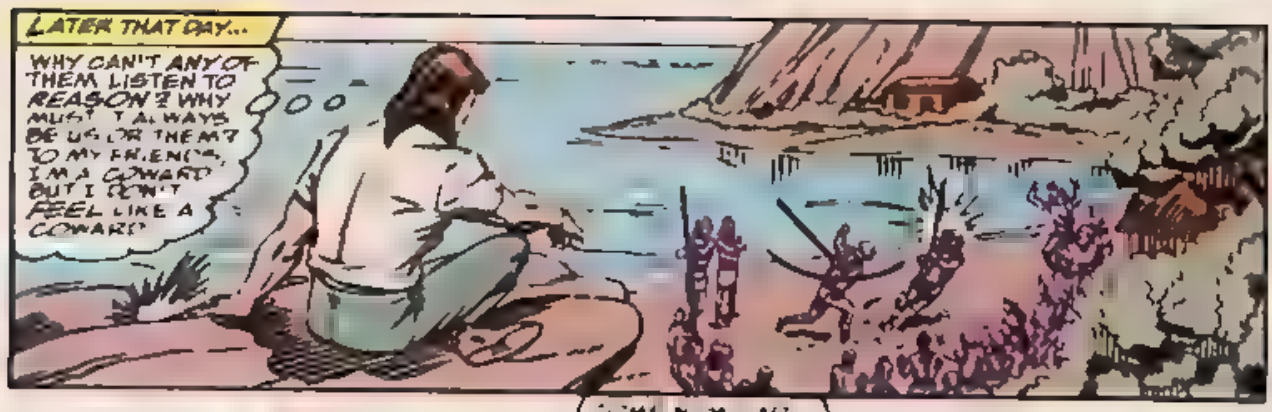

WHILE SOME RAN A FRANTIC RACE AGAINST TIME, CEDARIC TOOK A MORE THOUGHTFUL APPROACH...
KING SOLOMON WAS WISE AND DEFEATED HIS ENEMIES WITH INTELLIGENCE, NOT VIOLENCE!

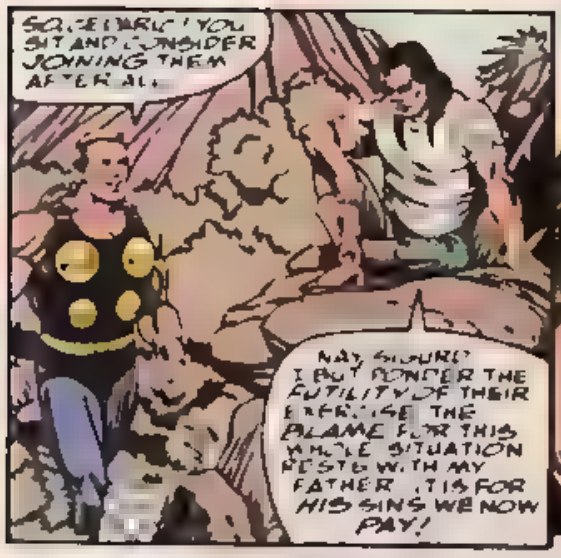

HO, CEDARIC! COME JOIN US IN THE DEFENSE OF OUR VILLAGE.. OR ARE YOU TOO BUSY WITH FANTASIES!
AT LEAST MY FANTASIES WON'T GET EVERYONE KILLED!
OH, AND WHAT WOULD YOUR PLAN BE?

I WOULD ABANDON THE VILLAGE AND HIDE IN THE CAVES UNTIL THE VANDALS HAVE SATISFIED THEIR GREED AND LUST FOR DESTRUCTION.

YOU WOULD HIDE? YOU'D DISHONOR ALL OF US AND YOUR FATHER'S MEMORY BY HIDING?!
I ASSUME THAT TO BE A RHETORICAL QUESTION.

'TIS BETTER TO RISK DISHONOR THAN BECOME LIKE UNTO A VANDAL!


LATER THAT DAY...
WHY CAN'T ANY OF THEM LISTEN TO REASON? WHY MUST IT ALWAYS BE US OR THEM? TO MY FRIENDS, I'M A COWARD BUT I DON'T FEEL LIKE A COWARD!

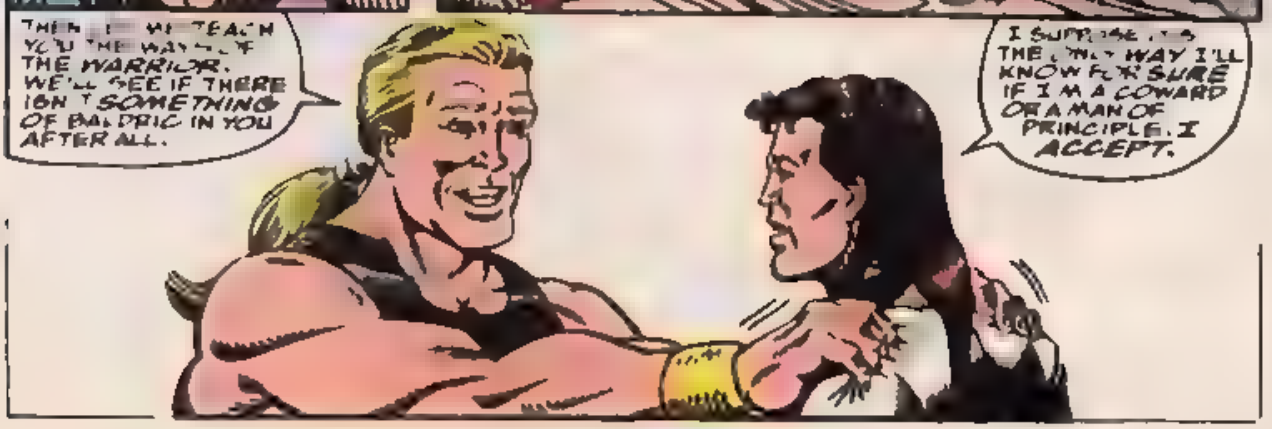

SO, SIR BARIC! YOU SIT AND CONSIDER JOINING THEM AFTER ALL...
NAY, SIGURD! I BUT PONDER THE FUTILITY OF THEIR EFFORTS. THE BLAME FOR THIS WHOLE SITUATION RESTS WITH MY FATHER. 'TIS FOR HIS SINS WE NOW PAY!

COME NOW, LAD! SURELY YOU WON'T HOLD YOUR FATHER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS OF AN OUTLAW VANDAL.

I DO. I ALSO HOLD HIM RESPONSIBLE FOR ABANDONING MY MOTHER AND ME TO THE FATES!
YOU'RE A STUBBORN LAD, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT BUT I DON'T THINK YOU'RE A COWARD!

Y-YOU DON'T!?!

NAY! I KNOW YOU TO BE A MAN OF HONOR AND PRINCIPLE AND I'M FAST COMING TO ADMIRE IT!
HOWEVER, OTHERS THINK YOU A COWARD AND AS LONG AS THEY DO, THEY'LL NOT LISTEN TO YOUR PECULIAR BRAND OF WISDOM!
AYE BUT WHAT CAN I DO? I'M NOT SURE ABOUT IT MYSELF!


THEN [illegible] WE'LL TEACH YOU THE WAYS OF THE WARRIOR. WE'LL SEE IF THERE ISN'T SOMETHING OF BALDRIC IN YOU AFTER ALL.
I SUPPOSE [illegible] THE ONLY WAY I'LL KNOW FOR SURE IF I'M A COWARD OR A MAN OF PRINCIPLE. I ACCEPT.

THE DAYS AHEAD WERE GRUELING...
ON GUARD, FRIEND SIGURD!!

UMMPH!
LESSON ONE: NEVER STRIKE AN OPPONENT OVER-HAND--YOU LEAVE YOURSELF OPEN!

YOU'D BE SLICED IN TWAIN!
I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN.

THAT'S IT! NOW YOU'RE GETTING THE HANG OF IT!
CEDARIC PROVED AN APT PUPIL, TAKING QUICKLY TO THE WAYS OF WAR...

...LEARNING SWORDPLAY AND HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT WITH FRIGHTENING EASE.

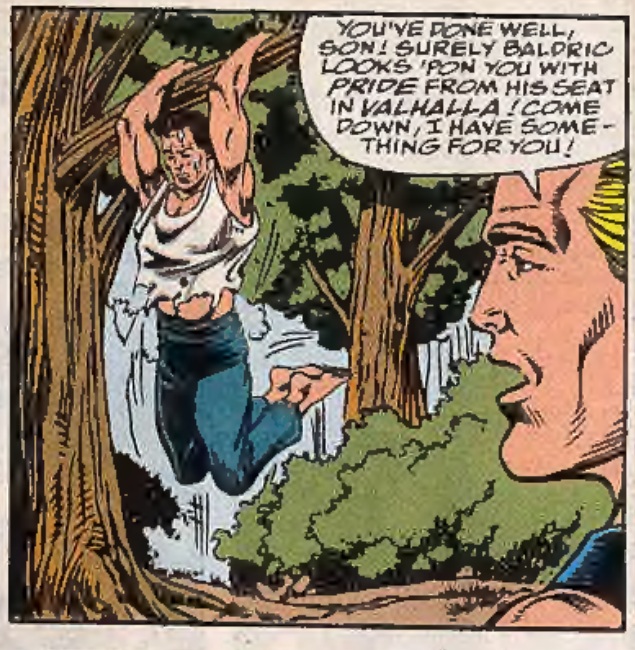
INDEED HE IS EVERY INCH HIS FATHER'S SON! WHEN HE REACHES FULL GROWTH HE WILL BE FORMIDABLE.

...ONE NINETY-NINE! TWO HUNDRED! EXCELLENT! NOW TAKE YOUR EASE!

HO, SIGURD! YOU BEGIN TO LAG BEHIND! PERHAP IT IS YOU WHO NEEDS A BREAK!

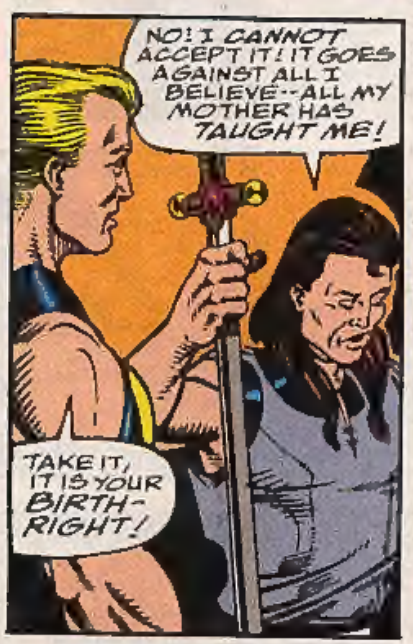
I AM NOT LAGGING, BUT WAITING TO CATCH YOU WHEN YOU DROP FROM EXHAUSTION.
HA! HA! HA!

AS THE TIME FOR THE CONFRONTATION DREW NEAR...
WELL DONE, LAD! YOU'RE ALMOST MY MATCH IN STRENGTH AND STAMINA!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "ALMOST"!?
AYE, AND COCKY AS WELL!


YOU'VE DONE WELL, SON! SURELY BALDRIC LOOKS 'PON YOU WITH PRIDE FROM HIS SEAT IN VALHALLA! COME DOWN, I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU!

THIS WAS YOUR FATHER'S SWORD "SKULLCRUSHER"! HE BADE ME GIVE IT TO YOU WHEN YOU CAME OF AGE.
WOW! IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

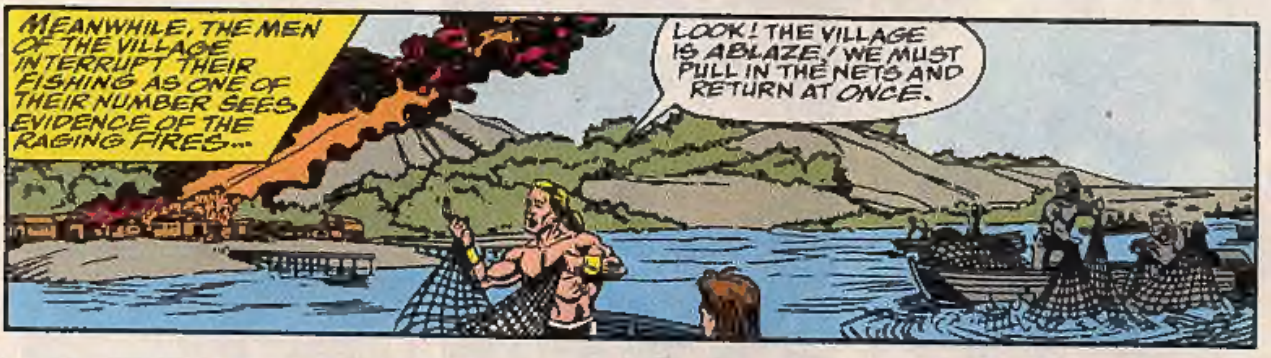
NEVER HAVE I SEEN A FINER EXAMPLE OF THE SWORDSMITH'S ART!

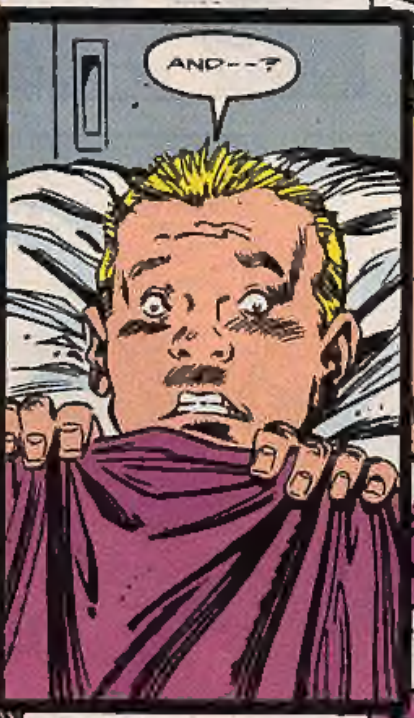

NO! I CANNOT ACCEPT IT! IT GOES AGAINST ALL I BELIEVE--ALL MY MOTHER HAS TAUGHT ME!
TAKE IT, IT IS YOUR BIRTHRIGHT!

"THEN I REJECT MY INHERITANCE!

NEXT MORNING...
I MUST NEEDS RIDE UP THE COAST AND SCOUT FOR VANDALS. BE PREPARED TO FIGHT AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE SHOULD I GIVE THE ALARM.

FAREWELL. I'LL RETURN SOON.
I HOPE SO, BECAUSE I DON'T THINK I COULD HELP TO DEFEND THE VILLAGE IF IT MEANT TAKING A LIFE!





TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE!

THE THUNDER STRIKES!

c/o Marvel Comics 387 Park Ave. South New York, NY 10016 (Addresses withheld by request)
Ralph Macchio: Waste Matt Idelson: Asst. Waste

Dear Thunderstrikers,

I would like to say that you are doing a fantastic job on THUNDERSTRIKE. I think that Bloodaxe is Marcy because in issue #9, page 14, panel 4, Marcy is wearing a hat and goes to mingle. But on page 15, panel 5, Bloodaxe's shadow is wearing a hat that looks in the shadow like Marcy's, and on panel 6, it appears that Bloodaxe has long hair like a girl in the shadow. So, until next time, make mine Marvel.

Lance Zonder
1501 N.E. 11th
Moore, OK 73160

True enough, but maybe, just *maybe* Bloodaxe is really a hippy? Impossible, you say? Not in this, the Marvel Age of comics!

Dear Thunderstrike,

Okay, that's it. I've had enough. Why must you insist upon this cloak and dagger stuff? I mean, I love a good mystery, but there's only so far that I would go. First, you give Eric a mysterious protector who turns out to be the stunning Stellaris. Then, there is the matter of Bloodaxe. Well, I've had enough. If you guys don't quit with the mysteries, me and all my friends are going to throw your book into the circular file.

How about a little history lesson? Bloodaxe obviously came to be in "THE MIGHTY THOR #499. Amora the Enchantress summoned it for Heimdall to wield just before she was attacked by the war god Skol. I will offer these two things: first, Bloodaxe is Ed Marrero. Second, setting aside the mysteries, this is a really great magazine. The art is fantastic and the storyline (most of the time) is gripping. I have followed this book since issue #1 and have liked *most* of it since then. Keep up the good work, and maybe you'll see me in Valhalla with a certain blond-haired Thunder God.

One more mystery and you'll be history. Hey! That actually rhymed. That's right, by Odin, I'm bad!

Christopher Michaels
26 Kissam Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10306

Thanks for the Bloodaxe refresher (like we don't think about that guy *enough*). Way to go with the rhyme *scheme*, though you can only *dream* that the mystery is over (That was probably closer to haiku, but who's counting?)!

Dear Mystical Mace Makers,

Hi, guys! Thunderstrike is the greatest hero of all time. I was really impressed with how he handled the Juggernaut back in issue #2. This comic has got it all: love, hate, jealousy, glory, life, death, wow! Not only is this the most action-packed comic in the galaxy, but it also has one of the greatest storylines this side of Asgard. Now, get ready to answer some questions.

1) When is Thunderstrike going to get the respect that he deserves from the public, media, S.H.I.E.L.D., the Avengers, and Kevin?

2) What can Eric's mace do? It doesn't seem to do anything except make him fly.

3) Why did Stellaris come back to Earth?

4) Are you guys at Marvel planning to kill off Eric? Way back in MARVEL AGE #123, you said that you already knew how the series was going to end and that you had planted a few hints. I just happened to be flipping through FANTASTIC FOUR #376 and I couldn't believe what I saw. Eric Masterson's grave alongside heroes that died while fighting the Sentinels. What gives?

5) I know who Bloodaxe is. Dr. Paretsky, of course. At Eric's party, we saw Bloodaxe's silhouette going upstairs, and it resembled the doctor's wild hairstyle. He also sees the results of violence in the world every day as a doctor.

Until Eric realizes he has the mutant ability to transform the sun's rays into powerful no-prizes, make mine Marvel!!!

Tom Kenney
154 Kelly Blvd.
Staten Island, NY 10314

Sheesh! If we knew there were so many T-Strike fans on Staten Island, we'd have set the series there! But seriously, every good question deserves at least a funny answer, so, here goes...

1) Probably never.

2) It also can break a block of wood, and then cleave a tomato like a hot knife through butter.

3) To hang with Eric--it sure beats flying around alone!

4) Heh, heh...(And if that ain't a hint, nothing is!)

5) Bloodaxe isn't a doctor--he just plays one on television.

Dear Waste, Assistant Waste, et al.:

All right! The gamma-goddess is back, even if for just one issue. From their first meeting in the first SECRET WARS (which I noticed someone forgot to notate) to their subsequent clashes in SOLO AVENGERS and THE SENSATIONAL SHE-HULK, the conflict with She-Hulk and Titania is, in my mind, more entertaining than any Wolverine/Sabertooth battle.

Also, this issue was also marred by not one, but two goofs. On page 20, panel 1, Stellaris actually talks for Thunderstrike. I won't even try for a no-prize on this, because there's no possible explanation for this one. Goof #2 was probably my fault, but in the letters, I had written "Until the letter "i" becomes popular again..." which came out as "Until the letter "j" becomes popular again..." But at least I'll admit I'm not perfect.

Chris Nemec
(Address withheld by request)

Whoops! Looks like you caught us with our pants down, Chris! (Say, maybe if we pulled our pants *up*, we'd be closer to perfection!) You're right; there's no explanation for Goof #1 except...we goofed! As for Goof #2, we're only too happy to blame *you!* (Hey, *you* volunteered!) As for that missing footnote, feel free to clip out the notation below and paste it in your copy of T-Strike...

> **SHULKIE & TITANIA FIRST TUSSLED IN SECRET WARS #7. --GAMMA RALFY*

Dear Strikers,

I just read #18. Lose the "Tales of Asgard." They're boring. Apparently, somebody somewhere likes them, so if you must, put them in the other thunder mag.

Besides, when was the last time Asgard ever did anything for me? For most of them, Midgard isn't worth messing with. It isn't even worth conquering unless it's to get Goldilocks honked off. We're nothing more than a street corner on the wrong side of the Rainbow Bridge that the All-Father wishes his son would stop hanging around.

Eric is of Earth. Keep him there. Have him send Odin a card on Father's Day.

Jack "Cappy" Leer
(Address withheld by request)

Yeesh! You're not shy with your feelings, eh, Cap? Seriously, we've got a very intentional reason for inserting those "Tales of Asgard" stories within T-Strike; Asgard will be playing a very large, daresay *enormous* role in the THUNDERSTRIKE tapestry this summer, so we wanted to familiarize some of our non-Norse readers with the characters of Asgard, and that's *all* we're going to say on the matter!

NEXT:

Loki beats on Eric! Eric gets some friends together to beat up Loki! A big fight ensues! Lots of things get broken! All that and some significant historical resonances, too!